

REMARKS

Claims 10-12, 16-18, 22-30, 38, 40, 42-44, 46, 48, 50-60, 62, 64 and 66-73 are pending in the application, with claims 10, 22, 25, 28, 51 and 56 being independent. Claims 1-9, 13-15, 19-21, 31-37, 39, 41, 45, 47, 49, 61, 63 and 65 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, obviating any rejections or objections to these claims. Claims 10, 16, 22, 51 and 56 are amended, and support for these amendments may be found, for example, in at least FIGS. 18A and 18B and corresponding text within the specification. New claims 69-73 are added. No new matter is added.

Claims 25-30, 43, and 44 are allowed. Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating the allowability of these claims.

Claims 10-12, 16-18, 22-24, 38, 40, 42, 46, 48, 50-60, 62, 64, and 66-68 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,413,958 to Imahashi et al. (Imahashi) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,406,709 to Celler et al. (Celler).

Regarding these rejections, Applicant respectfully submits that neither Imahashi nor Celler, nor any combination of the two, discloses or properly suggests all of the limitations of at least independent claims 10, 22, 51, and 56, as amended.

For example, claim 10 recites (with emphasis added):

A method of manufacturing a semiconductor device comprising the steps of:
forming a semiconductor film over an upper surface of a substrate;
setting said substrate onto a stage having a plurality of suction inlets;
flattening said substrate by vacuum-sucking a lower surface of said substrate using said plurality of suction inlets; and
irradiating said semiconductor film with a laser beam having a cross section which is elongated in one direction while relatively moving said substrate with respect to said laser beam, and while vacuum-sucking said lower surface of said substrate.

Even assuming for the sake of response that Celler discloses holding a sample on a vacuum chuck during irradiation, Applicant respectfully submits that Celler does not disclose or

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properly suggest "... a stage having a plurality of suction inlets..." where the plurality of suction inlets are used to flatten a lower surface of a substrate, as claimed. Further, Imahashi does not disclose or properly suggest such a stage having the claimed plurality of suction inlets, where the substrate is flattened by vacuum-sucking a lower surface thereof using the plurality of suction inlets.

Since neither Celler nor Imahashi, nor any proper combination thereof, discloses or fairly suggests at least these features, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 10 is allowable for at least these reasons. Independent claims 22, 51, and 56 recite the same or similar features, and are therefore believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons. As a result, dependent claims 11, 12, 16-18, 23-24, 38, 40, 42, 46, 48, 50, 52-60, 62, 64, and 66-73 are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons. Since claims 25-30, 43, and 44 are already allowed, Applicant submits that all claims are now in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested in the Examiner's next official communication.

Enclosed is a \$110 check for the Petition for Extension of Time fee. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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